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### 17. NOTE ON THE PECULIAR BEHAVIOUR OF DRAGONFLIES

It is now known that certain dragonflies have the habit of following, without any apparent reason, moving objects both animate and inanimate. For example, Acharya (1961) and Worth (1962) reported unspecified dragonflies following bicycles and Corbet (1962) reported *Brachythemis leucosticta* following a walking man over a concrete pavement in Africa. I have observed an *Ictinogomphus rapax* Ramb. following a moving tram car for about 10 metres on a June evening in 1966, and a *Pantala flavescens* (Fab.) following for about 6-7 metres another tram car in an afternoon of April, 1968. On the latter occasion the dragonfly was found to hit against the roof of the vehicle. One morning in July, 1970, some examples of *Crocothemis servilia* (Dr.) were observed to follow motor vehicles running along a main trunk road in the suburbs of Calcutta for about 4 to 5 metres and then to come back their original place. Sometimes several *Diplacodes trivialis* (Ramb.) and *Brachythemis contaminata* (Fab.) dragonflies are found to follow men walking along grasslands.

Acharya (1961) considered this behaviour of dragonflies as fun, but Worth (1962) considered it as hunting strategy. But Corbet (1962) did not consider it as a preying technique because no small-winged insect was found to rest on the concrete pavement. Similarly, no winged insect could possibly be resting near moving vehicles and men. From the above facts it is clear, as Corbet (1962) has already suggested

that the response of dragonflies towards moving objects offers promising field for research in odonata behaviour.

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#### 18. FOOD PREFERENCES IN THE LARVAE OF TWO MOTHS: *SPODOPTERA LITURA* F. (FAM. NOCTUIDAE) AND *DIACRISIA OBLIQUA* WALK. (FAM. ARCTIIDAE)

(With a text-figure)

The larvae of the moths *Spodoptera litura* and *Diacrisia obliqua* are serious pests of cruciferous plants in Saharanpur (U.P.) and are responsible for considerable damage. The larvae of the former (*S. litura*) hatch out in early September, and have an average larval period of about ten days completed in five moults and mainly feed upon cauliflower leaves of the early crop. The larvae of the latter (*D. obliqua*) hatch out in late October, and have an average larval period of about thirty eight days completed in six moults and are mainly pests on raddish leaves. In the light of thermal constant derived by Muggeridge (1942)<sup>1</sup> in regard to the development of *Pieris rapae*, difference between the duration of their larval periods—10 days in the former and 38 days in the latter—is perhaps accountable since the normal room temperature recorded in early September was around 30°C as against 20°-18°C in late October.

With a view to determine the extent of food preference in the larvae of the two moths (*S. litura* and *D. obliqua*) their comparative rate of feeding during the entire larval period was studied on their usual food (cauliflower leaves in the case of *S. litura* and raddish

<sup>1</sup> MUGGERIDGE, J. (1942): The White Butterfly (*Pieris rapae* L.): Its establishment, spread and control in New Zeland. *N. Z J. Sci. & Tech.* 24(3).